



# Network

## Consumer News

LARGE PRINT VERSION

## Remaining Active with Kidney Disease

There is more to life than taking pills and going to medical appointments. In 2008, 32% of dialysis patients in the Northwest (between the ages of 18 and 54) either worked or attended school.

Patients that remain active feel better. Attending school, working, volunteering, or taking up a hobby can improve your life and, in some cases, your health. Research suggests people on dialysis who keep working have less pain, better energy, and better overall health. Work can give us a sense of purpose and help keep our minds active. It can also be a source of support.

It is common to have doubts and concerns about being able to work or returning to work. Will I lose my disability income? Will I lose my medical benefits? Do I have the energy?

Good news! There are government programs in place to allow you to test your ability to work. Some of the programs include:

- **Trial Work Period** – for people on Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), you can receive your regular disability check for 9 months regardless of how much you make as long as you report your work activity.
- **Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS)** – for people on Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security may allow you to keep some income and/or resources for a specified time for a work goal. For

example, you could set aside money to pay expenses for education, job training, or starting a business.

- **Medicare and Medicaid Coverage** – for people on Medicare, you remain eligible as long as you are on dialysis and for a period of time after transplant. For people on Medicaid, you may be able to continue to receive your insurance benefits or possibly pay a small premium to keep it (depending upon the state).

The options available to patients vary by state and situation. It is very important that you fully understand the rules and your options before making any decisions.

Each state has a Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) to help people with disabilities to work.

Your dialysis or transplant social worker should also be able to answer some of your questions and/or refer you to other rehabilitation programs.

Work is not an option for everyone. If you are unable to work, consider volunteering, going to school, or pursuing a hobby. Remaining active is the key.

#### State DVR Agencies

Alaska	1-800-478-2815
Idaho	208-334-3390
Montana	1-877-296-1197
Oregon	1-877-277-0513
Washington	1-800-637-5627

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## VALUABLE LESSONS

By Christine Sanders

Network Patient Advisory Committee Member

While looking for a job herself, Christine has learned some valuable lessons to sustain her optimism.

**SURROUND YOURSELF WITH POSITIVE PEOPLE.** There are way too many negative people out there. Limit your contact with them, even if they are your family or friends. The negative energy is draining and can easily influence how you look at your situation.

**HAVE FUN!** No matter how challenging your day, find time to enjoy yourself and your friends. End your day with something fun and relaxing to de-stress yourself

Have **a resume or business card available at all times.** You never know who you may run into at the store, church or wherever you frequently go.

**KEEP A POSITIVE ATTITUDE!** This is vital to your physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. No matter how crummy my day or how I feel at the moment, staying positive always helps me recognize that things could be a lot worse.

**SERVE OTHERS!** I noticed that the more time I spent helping other people, from my neighbors to strangers, the better I felt about my day and myself. It does not have to be anything big. I like to cook so once a week I cook a hot meal for my senior neighbor across the street. I also volunteer at my local soup kitchen and for my church.

**CALL BACK AND/OR SEND A THANK YOU CARD/EMAIL.** Yes, most agencies will remember the person who said thank you even though they did not get the position. You never know when something may open in the future. So send a thank you card, email or call after your first contact. Follow-up is important.

**GO BACK TO SCHOOL!** If you have the free time available, go back and get higher education, or take some college courses you always wanted.

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## LEARNING POINTS

**Trial Work Period** – the 9 month period that people on SSDI can keep full benefits, regardless of their earnings.

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## RELATED WEB RESOURCES

Life Options

[www.lifeoptions.org](http://www.lifeoptions.org)

Social Security

*Ticket to Work Program*

[www.ssa.gov/work](http://www.ssa.gov/work)

Social Security

*Working While Disabled Booklet*

[www.ssa.gov/pubs/10095.pdf](http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10095.pdf)

If you would like the information but do not have access to the Internet, please contact us:

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**Patient**

**Toll-Free Number**

**1.800.262.1514**

**[www.nwrenalnetwork.org](http://www.nwrenalnetwork.org)**

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